

for Democrats to burn down the House in order to save it."

Burn down the House, Mr. Speaker. That is their strategy. Many on the left think that that is the way to take back this House, and we on this side of the aisle are going to continue working on the issues that the American people care about and continue moving this Nation forward.

ORGANIZED LABOR LEADING THE FIGHT FOR ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KUHLMANN of New York). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, as our Nation struggles with soaring health care costs, bankrupt pensions, and devastating job loss, it is organized labor that leads the fight to protect, defend, and advance the economic security of our Nation.

I was recently meeting with leaders from the Ohio Association of Public School Employees, and we talked about all of the issues facing our Members and their members in my home district and throughout the State of Ohio. We talked about the contract-by-contract struggle to hold health care costs down. We talked about the impact of the State budget and the devastating ideas to expand privatization, make it easier to lay off workers, and force school districts to minimize or diminish health insurance, and to limit collective bargaining.

The answer to Ohio's problems is not to weaken labor unions like OAPSE, but to strengthen them and to let all of our communities share in the benefits that labor has worked so hard to achieve. I am proud of unions like OAPSE, and I am proud to share in their fight for dignity and respect.

Right now, in my State, we have a crisis for our retirees, the very people who gave their entire working lives to serve children in Ohio's schools. They need a retirement that offers a good quality of life and one that relieves the pressure of deciding between food and medicine.

Mr. Speaker, we need to take care of the people who take care of our kids; and if what is happening in Ohio is any indication, we are failing miserably.

On Monday of this week, I was at a school in my district; and while at that school, I learned of schools in our region terminating breakfast programs in order to save money. I learned of art and music classes being canceled. I learned of libraries being closed in some schools, and operating on a half-time basis in others. I learned of teachers of gifted students being laid off. I learned of high schools where all foreign language classes have been canceled. In short, I heard about conditions which, left unabated, will lead to the disintegration of our great State.

But standing here in the people's House, I am hopeful. I am hopeful be-

cause the people of Ohio are fighters, and unions like OAPSE are leading that fight. Because of their efforts, we will bring back Ohio and Ohio will once again lead the Nation in building a better future for our kids.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Georgia?

There was no objection.

LET US WORK TOGETHER FOR THE GOOD OF AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, our friends on the other side of the aisle have opened a Pandora's box by spending most of the 109th Congress focused on ethics matters. With all the righteous indignation they can muster, the minority has called for investigations of the majority leader's every move, even digging up stories as far back as 1997.

At the same time, the minority prohibited the Ethics Committee for 4 months from convening to hear the charges that they were leveling against a Member of Congress. It is obvious, Mr. Speaker, that our colleagues on the other side of the aisle simply did not want to give the majority leader a chance to make his case to the committee and to clear his name. They hoped to look like paragons of purity. Instead, we know now that they are just the purveyors of partisan politics. By grinding the Ethics Committee to a halt, they knew that every story about Tom DeLay would have the phrase "under investigation." And why give him a chance to prove his innocence when you can trap your political nemesis in a cloud of suspicion and controversy? Why have a fair hearing when you can rig public opinion through implications and accusations in the news media?

The minority leadership has called for investigations of Mr. DeLay's travels. Mr. DeLay has welcomed the chance to present his case, and I have full faith that he will present his case vigorously. But I would caution and I would ask the minority leader to be more careful to consider the implications for her caucus the next time that they call for a congressional probe. The

minority leader and the minority whip have now trapped some of their own Members with their own fiery rhetoric.

The Democratic leadership called for investigations of lobbyists paying for travel. What they did not count on was that several members of their caucus took trips paid for by registered lobbyists. Some have admitted that they missed filing deadlines for disclosures on numerous trips. To their credit, they apologized for their errors, but then went on to say, I can tell you one thing, Jack Abramoff was not on any one of the trips. But Abramoff was involved in travel for other Democratic Members. The Associated Press reported yesterday that two Democrats "received travel expenses initially paid for by lobbyist Jack Abramoff on his credit card or by his firm."

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not want this body to denigrate itself. We do not serve the people who elected us and we do not serve our parties in the long term if we engage in an ethics war with charges and counter-charges. Let us be clear: there are no winners in an ethics war. Everyone loses. Instead of helping the American people, we disgust them. Instead of building up, we tear down the working relationship that we need across the aisle to do this Nation's business.

We need to concentrate on the good things that we have done so far in the 109th Congress, like abolishing the inheritance tax, the energy bill, the transportation bill, bankruptcy reform, class action lawsuit reform, winning the war on terror, protecting our borders; and there are many more good things that we need to do in this country, Mr. Speaker, for the American people. Let us work together.

INNOVATIVE HEALTH CARE INITIATIVES FOR AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Cover the Uninsured Week. Many of us have heard from our constituents this week, just as we have in the weeks, months, and years prior, asking that we make health insurance coverage a top priority of the 109th Congress. America's families are living in fear that someone they love might develop a health problem that they cannot afford. We must begin a meaningful dialogue about this problem that will continue until every American has access to quality, affordable health insurance.

This national disgrace has reached crisis proportions. Forty-five million Americans, more than 8 million of whom are children and more than 80 percent of whom live in working families, are one ambulance trip away from financial devastation.

I was pleased to join the gentlewoman from California (Leader PELOSI) and other Democrats in cosponsoring